



Boxer And Feinstein Introduce Legislation To Help Students Obtain The Maximum Pell Grant Available

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Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein (both D-CA) today introduced legislation to remove a barrier in the Pell Grant system that unfairly prevents students who attend lower-tuition colleges from receiving the maximum grant.

Their bill, the Pell Grant Equity Act, written and passed in the House by Reps. George Miller (D-CA) and Howard “Buck” McKeon (R-CA), would eliminate what is known as the “tuition sensitivity” provision from the Federal Pell Grant program. The provision bases the amount received for Pell Grant awards on the amount of tuition charged by colleges, and therefore negatively impacts students attending community colleges and other lower tuition institutions.

Senator Boxer said, **“The Pell Grant was created to help ensure that students from lower-income families have the opportunity and freedom to attend the college of their choice. This ‘tuition sensitivity’ provision unfairly penalizes students—including thousands in California-- who attend lower-tuition colleges. This simple legislation will help those students make ends meet so they can focus on their studies and their future.”**

Senator Feinstein said, **“Federal Pell Grants are the cornerstone of our need-based financial aid system, ensuring that all students have access to higher education. However, the Pell Grant program’s current eligibility formula penalizes students who attend community colleges and other institutions. This bill would eliminate this provision and ensure that our nation’s students are not penalized for receiving an education they can afford at a community college. We must continue do all we can to make a college education more accessible and affordable for all.”**

The current Pell Grant formula is based on the faulty assumption that tuition is the greatest financial barrier to attending college. In fact, it is often associated expenses, including books, supplies, transportation and housing, that present the greatest burden. By reducing grants for students with lower tuition costs, the current formula unfairly penalizes those students.

According to the Congressional Research Service, the Pell Grant Equity Act would benefit approximately 96,000 students in the 2007-2008 academic year, and would provide an average Pell Grant scholarship increase of \$108 per student. The bill will provide a one-year fix in order to offer students immediate relief.